रेल मंत्रालय के राज्य मंत्री (श्री माधवराव सिंधिया) : (क) जी नहीं, उल्लिखित अवधि के दौरान नहीं ।

(ख) प्रश्न नहीं उठता ।

Vacancies Lying: Vacant in National Railway Users' Consultative Committee

2659. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state;

(a) the number of posts lying vacant in National Railway Users' Consultative Committee and since how long;

(b) the number of meetings of this Committee held during the last three years;

(c) what were the decisions taken in these meetings; and

(d) what steps Government propose to take to make this Council more active?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) to (d) The National Railway Users' Consultative Council has not been in existence since July, 1980. However, the Council is in the process of reconstitution.

Rail Link Between Bombay and Mangalore Along West Coast

2660. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state-.

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that about a thousand km. stretch between BomFSy and Mangalore along west coast is without a rail connection;

(b) if so what steps Government propose to take to create rail connection along west coast in form of Konkan Railway; and

(c) what are the details of the proposal with time schedute?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): fa) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) provide a direct rail link between Bombay and Mangalore meant construction of about 890 km of new railway line between Apta and Mangalore. Of this, 62 km between Apta and Rbha has so far been completed and opened to traffic.

Surveys to evaluate the new line between Roha and Mangalore, which is needed to link Bombay to Mangalore, have been taken up. No investment decision can be taken, till the surveys are completed and reports examined. As such, it is not possible to indicate any time schedule, at this stage.

Telphone Connections in Bihar

2661. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state.-

(a) what is the number of telephone connections provided in the rural areas of Bihar as on the 31st July, 1987;

(b) what is the number of telephone connections in each district of Bihar;

(c) what is the number of telephone connections in each sub-division of Bihar; and

(d) what is the number of new telephone connections proposed to be given during the current Plan period in entire Bihar (District-wise)?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) This type of information is collected six monthly. The telephone con-i nections provided in rural areas of j Bihar as on 31-3-1987 is 12612.

(b) This information is given in the enclosed statement. (See below).

(c) and (d) This information is not readily available. The information will be supplied.

Statement

District-wise summary of Telephone connections as on 31-3-1987.

SI. No.	Name of District	Working connection	Connections Planned in 7th Plan.
1	Aurangabad	202	100
2	Bhojpur	901	100
3	Bhagalpur .	2600	600
4	Begusarai .	1336	300
5	Chapra	881	100
6	Champaran (East)	869	100
7	Champaran (West)	716	100
8	Dhanbad	8920	600
9	Dumka	480	300
10	Deoghar .	701	200
11	Darbhanga	1126	300
12	Gumla	160	50
13	Gaya	2847	800
14	Gopalagangj	256	100
15	Giridih	973	200
16	Godda	94	30
17	Hazaribagh	2245	400
18	Jebanabad .	109	100
19	Katihar .	687	100
20	Khagaria .	241	200
21	Lohardaga. .	117	100
22	Mujaffarpur .	3800	800
23	Monghyr .	1200	200
24	Madhubani . .	574	200
25	Madhepura .	268	100
26	Nalanda . .	684	400
27	Nawada .	255	200
28	Palanma . .	882	300
29	Purnea	1476	300
30	Patna .	17404	11,000
31	Kanchi . .	8741	5,379

SI. No.	Name of Distrct	Working connection	Connections Planne in 7th Plan
32	Rohtas	890	100
33	Singhbhum.	7909	800
34	Samastipur	794	100
35	Sitamarhi .	676	300
36	Sahebgauj .	300	100
37	Siwan	458	200
38	Saharsa	614	200
39	Vaishali (Hajipur)	462	200

Provision of connection depends on receipt of equipment.

Quality of Correspondence Courses

2662. SHRI S. S. AHULUWALIA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the concept of distance education (correspondence course) was introduced to accord facility to students who wer engaged in earning "livelihood or whose grades in the higher secondary education were not commensurating with standard set for admission to colleges;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the fees charged are also a fact that the fees charged are very high co-the fees charged are very high compared to those charged from regular students; and

(c) whether Government have assessed the quality of such courses conducted by different Universities and if so, what are the findings thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN *THE* DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI); (a) Distance .Education in-eluding correspondence courses, has emerged as an alternative mode of education to the formal system of education. It is not a system of education either for those who are em-ployed or those who are academically poor. On the other hand, it provides opportunities to all those who wish to pursue higher education without being restrained by the rigidities of the formal system especially those relating to requirements like entry qualifications, duration attendance, etc.

(b) The distance education programmes rely heavily on self-instructional material made available to every student. The fees levied from students enrolled in distance education programmes also inclue a partial recovery of the expenditure incurred on the production of these materials. The fees are therefore higher than those levied from students enrolled in full-time courses.

(c) The Government have not under-taken any study of the quality of the correspondence programmes offered by different Universities.